



**Correlation of spirituality in organizational environment and attitude towards virtual world mediated by managers' citizenship behavior in private companies**

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**Correlation of spirituality in organizational environment and attitude towards virtual world mediated by managers' citizenship behavior in private companies**

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**ABSTRACT:**

The present research delved into the correlation of spirituality in workplace and people's attitude towards the virtual world mediated by the organizational citizenship behavior. Due to the extended meaning of the spirituality concept, Liu and Robertson's (2011) three-factor scale, Podsakoff's (2000) questionnaire for measuring citizenship behavior and Kim et al.'s (2005) seven-factor virtual world questionnaire were used. The present research population was comprised of 342 managers of private companies all over Iran. To analyze the data, firstly the reliability was assessed through Cronbach's alpha and then the required statistical analyses were run to estimate the correlation coefficients. The findings revealed a statistically significant causal relationship between spirituality in organizational environment and attitude towards virtual world mediated by citizenship behavior.

**Key terms:** spirituality in organizational environment, attitude towards virtual world, citizenship behavior, managers of private companies in Iran



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## **1. INTRODUCTION:**

A novel concept in behavioral sciences and management within the past decades is organizational spirituality. Its significance is such that has made it a key trend in the twenty first century (Shellenbarger, 2000). Throughout the nineties and afterwards, there has been a dramatic increase in books, articles, lectures and instructions on spirituality in workplace (Neal & Biberman, 2003). Despite the influential role of spirituality in social systems, there is a dearth of scientific research into spirituality in workplace. Moreover, organizations today tend more to replace rigid hierarchies with group-based structures and independent teams. The rapid and dynamic growth of organizations in competition demands effective staff in the target market. This precious generation of employees has truly distinguished effective from ineffective organizations and is known as an organization's troops. In order for an organization's objectives to be achieved, they work more than they are supposed to without necessarily any rewards. A self-initiated, more than expected and useful attempt is called organizational citizenship behavior. Organization managers especially those organizations for which human interactions matter more always prefer a staff with a high level of organizational behavior. They also tend to recognize the contexts better and improve this behavior.

On the other hand, the dominance of information exchange through electronic means of communication has made human beings change the communicative methods. The changes are so vast that have made the present century, the age of information communication. Similarly, the majority of civil societies tend more to get scientific and have inevitable joint social networks in the virtual world. Today, virtual world has invaded most of people's lives and is ever increasing.

The present research seeks to find the correlation of spirituality of official environments and people's attitude towards the virtual world and its multiple dimensions directly or mediated by citizenship behavior.

### **A) Organizational spirituality**

Depending on contexts, spirituality represents different meanings and perspectives. It has been defined by Mitroff as the tendency to search and find and live according to a final goal in life (Mitroff & Denton, 1999). As a human prescriptive science, spirituality lies within psychology and theology domains (Helminiak, 1998). In other words, spirituality



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is a subject in religious psychology (Helminiak, 2006) and is closely related to the five-factor personality model (MacDonald, 2000). Spirituality is personalized religion. It is informal, personalized, void of title-less for individuals, comprehensive, flexible, positive, imperceptible, qualitative and self-initiated; it follows an emotional, non-authoritative approach with the least responsiveness and proper for workplace (Hyman & Handal, 2006; Koenig et al. 2001). Spirituality is often indirectly defined as similarities or differences with being religious (Liu & Robertson, 2011).

Spirituality is viewed by Graber (2000) as a non-professional, irreligious matter which is non-hierarchical and secular (Graber, 2000). These researchers see the recognition of spirituality variety and getting involved in moral matters as essential without any harm to others. From the religious perspective, spirituality is part of a religion (Krishnakumar & Neck, 2002: 155). Concerning workplace spirituality, as Christians believe, spirituality is a kind of invitation to work and cooperation with God's creatures. In Islam working ethics do matter. The existentialistic/secular approach see the search for meaning at work as the main goal and seeks for it in responses made to why-, how- and what-questions of work (Naylor et al., 1996). According to this approach, a human force who searches for answers to these questions feels more satisfied and feels sound, performs better and acts more efficiently. However, finding no solution is associated with low efficiency and failure. Those opposing to spirituality including the postmodern skeptic view spirituality negative and see it as a tool in managers' and leaders' hands to take advantage of those of a lower rank (Boje, 2000).

Currently, there is almost no access to an agreed-upon model or research methodology with this respect. In other words, despite the necessity of empiric research for developing theories, there is a dearth of proper instrumentation which can be accepted in social sciences (Lund et al., 2003). In their research into the theory and measurement of organizational spirituality, Liu and Robertson (2011) integrate the existing literature on spirituality to suggest a comprehensive framework of spirituality theory. In this model, the concept of spirituality is structured and examined in three separate but inter-related factors: communication with a superior power, communication with humans and communication with nature and all living creatures. Considering the characteristics of this



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research, for the spirituality part in organizational environment, the proper framework and instrument will be used.

**B) Virtual world**

Prior to the advent of the internet system, a number of organizations used information technology to reform and improve their activities. However, with the advent of the internet in 1960s as a networking system developed by the U.S. ministry of defense, it was hard to anticipate its distribution and effect in the next half a century. Advent of personal computers in 1980s was a great revolution in information technology systems and was a herald of a new trend in organizations. Virtual reality is marked by such aspects as electronic dominance, social distribution and structural factors. Electronic dominance includes new leadership styles, strategy development, service provision, commercial transactions, education, civil cooperation and information transfer. Social distribution can include people, organizations, societies, governments and the whole world. Structural factors are also comprised of tool design, communications, technology, human force rehabilitation and development management. There are four sections in the recognition of virtual world (Gunasekaran& Ngai, 2005): information, communication, distribution and exchange. In order to use information technology, similar to other technologies, there is a need for certain initial equipment and facilities such as servers, local networks, extended and all-inclusive networks and user units. Each social network is a set of hardware, communicative systems, sent or received data. The current application of these networks has led to the formation of a global village void of any geographic distance and barriers among individuals, organizations and societies. It has also served to exchange messages and documents, distribute information, hold live sessions without the need for physical attendance and creation of virtual characters. Since human development itself leads to technology development, human development and IT applications as well as the use of virtual world have cyclically influenced each other.

**C) Organizational citizenship behavior**

Citizenship behavior was firstly introduced into the world of management by Batman and Organ. However, such pioneers as Barnard referred to this concept in their investigation of self-initiated behavior and performance and behaviors far from expectation. Pre-social behavior, infra-role behavior, organizational self-initiation, performance beyond one's



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role and background performance are terms with different origins used in conceptualizing organizational citizenship behavior.

Investigations and analyses of organizational citizenship behavior seek to identify, manage and evaluate the infra-role behaviors of staff in an organization, which is associated with dynamicity. In a description of organizational citizenship behavior, Organ pointed individualization and voluntariness in achieving organizational goals and reported them as absent in the formal organizational reward system though playing a role in efficacy and efficiency (Organ, 1988: 54). Today, organizational citizenship behavior is being investigated in two domains: employee citizenship behavior and management citizenship behavior (Bolino, Turnley, 2003).

Finally, the main research question is: is there a significant correlation between managers' organizational spirituality in private companies (and its aspects) and the members' attitude towards virtual world and its aspects? Moreover, what is the effect of managers' organizational spirituality in private companies and its multiple aspects on the staff's attitude mediated by citizenship behavior?

## **2. METHODS:**

The present research is based on a cognitive methodology and data collection. It is considered a quantitative, heuristic and correlational study. It is a basic, goal-oriented research (McMillan & Schumacher, 1984). The present variables include spirituality in organizational environment as the independent variable while the staff's attitude towards the virtual world is the dependent variables. Citizenship behavior acts as the mediating variable. How these variables are correlated is aimed to be causally investigated. A strength of the present research is the generalizability of results.

To look into how the research variables are correlated, Liu and Robertson's (2011) spirituality in organizational environment was employed which deals with three factors: communication with the superior power, communication with human being and communication with nature. Moreover, Kim et al.'s attitude towards virtual world questionnaire was used with seven factors: intention of use, attitude, perceived usability, ease of use, compatibility, social impact and perceived enjoyment. It followed a five-level Likert style for the total citizenship behavior score.



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To estimate sample size in a randomized cluster sampling, in the absence of the variance of the target population, initially a pilot test was done on 30 managers. The variance, initial mean and the total sample size were estimated through Cochran formula.

According to Wiersma(1991), the basically dynamic and active features of research are empiricism, validity, reliability and systematicity. For estimating the validation of the questionnaires used in this research, construct and external validities were considered. The latter was done through randomized sampling. Confirmatory factor analysis was run and the construct validity was confirmed. There were seven factors in the attitude to virtual world questionnaire and three factors in organizational environment spirituality questionnaire. Cronbach's alpha was checked for testing the reliability of the questionnaires and was found to be .9 for the attitude questionnaire and .93 for the spirituality questionnaire. For the citizenship behavior questionnaire, it was found to be .96. SPSS22 as well as Amos 18 were used to analyze the data.

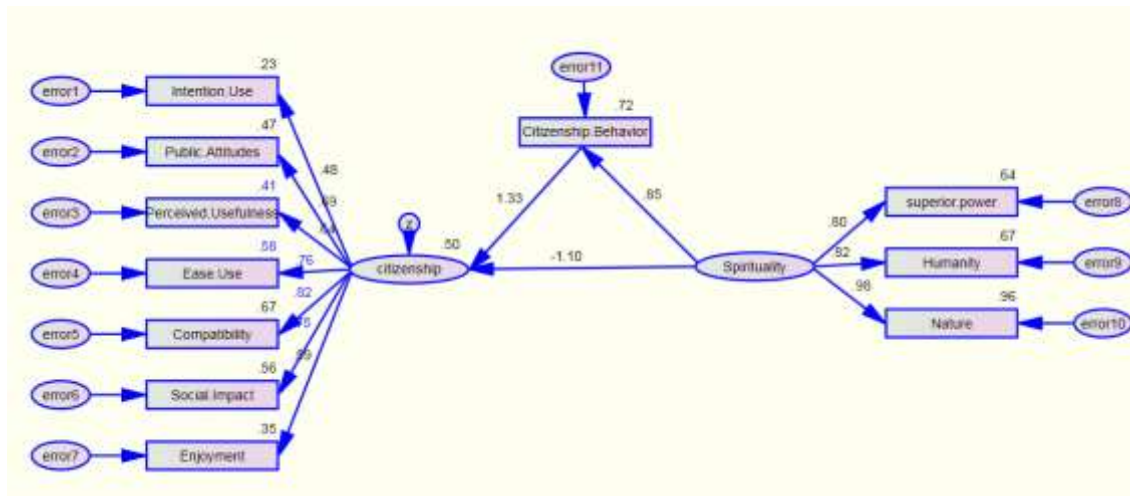
### **3. FINDINGS:**

55.8% of the sample were male and the rest were female. In this sample, 50.4% of the subjects were single and 49.6% were married. Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used to analyze the normal distribution of data. The result pointed to the normal distribution of the data concerning attitude to virtual world ( $z=.459$ ,  $\text{sig}=.984$ ), citizenship behavior ( $z=.628$ ,  $\text{sig}=.825$ ) and organizational spirituality ( $z=.945$ ,  $\text{sig}=.334$ ). Independent-sample t-test was used to test the difference between the two sexes (male and female managers). The t-test result for attitude to virtual world was  $t=-3.669$ ,  $\text{sig}=.027$ , for citizenship behavior:  $t=3.227$ ,  $\text{sig}=.001$  and for organizational spirituality:  $t=2.328$ ,  $\text{sig}=.020$ . Therefore, there is a statistically significant difference between the three variables. However, there is no statistically significant divergence between the single and married in terms of attitude towards the virtual world ( $t=-1.30$ ,  $\text{sig}=.194$ ), citizenship behavior ( $t=-.765$ ,  $\text{sig}=.445$ ) and organizational spirituality ( $t=-1.542$ ,  $\text{sig}=.124$ ). However, the main research question is if there is a direct or indirect (mediated by citizenship behavior) correlation between spirituality in organizational environment and attitude to virtual world. A structural equation modelling was run in Amos to investigate this research question. It runs a path analysis to see how organizational spirituality relates to attitude to the virtual world as mediated by citizenship behavior.



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**Figure 1: Fitness of the structural equation model of organizational spirituality and attitude towards virtual world mediated by citizenship behavior**

Multivariate analysis and path analysis were employed to investigate the interrelationship of organizational spirituality and attitude to the virtual world mediated by citizenship behavior. Acceptance or rejection of the hypotheses is done through standardized coefficients and significance level. For all the paths, the confidence level was 95% and level of error was 5%.

**Table 1: Correlation coefficient of spirituality in organizational environment, attitude towards virtual world and citizenship behavior**

Compa tibility	EaseUs e	Perceived Usefulnes s	Enjoymen t	SocialImp act	PublicAt titudes	Intentio nUse	
-0.95	-0.85	.022	.029	.162**	-.052	.15*	<b>Superiorpo wer</b>
-0.12*	-0.88	-.013	.058	.138*	-.024	.199**	<b>Humanity</b>
-.024	-.052	.014	.076	.12*	-.054	.127*	<b>Nature</b>
.20**	.24**	.27**	.29**	.32**	.45**	.27**	<b>Citizenship Behavior</b>

\* p-value <.05

\*\* p-value <.01





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As it can be observed in table 1, there is no statistically significant correlation between organizational spirituality and attitude towards the virtual world. However, there is a significant effect between citizenship behavior and attitude towards the virtual world.

**Table 2: Direct SEM paths between spirituality in organizational environment and attitude towards virtual world mediated by citizenship behavior**

			Estimate Regressi on	Estimate Standardiz ed Regression	S. E.	C.R .	P
CitizenshipBehav ior	<-- -	Spirituality	.521	.846	.028	18.46 8	** *
citizenship	<-- -	Spirituality	-.395	-1.096	.055	- 7.186	** *
citizenship	<-- -	CitizenshipBeha vior	.778	1.327	.097	8.047	** *
PerceivedUsefuln ess	<-- -	citizenship	1.592	.638	.200	7.964	** *
EaseUse	<-- -	citizenship	2.049	.763	.237	8.651	** *
Compatibility	<-- -	citizenship	1.280	.821	.144	8.898	** *
Nature	<-- -	Spirituality	1.044	.981	.046	22.54 6	** *
Humanity	<-- -	Spirituality	.754	.820	.043	17.68 2	** *
Superiorpower	<-- -	Spirituality	1.000	.799	-	-	-
IntentionUse	<-- -	citizenship	1.000	.484	-	-	-





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			Estimate Regressi on	Estimate Standardiz ed Regression	S. E.	C.R .	P
PublicAttitudes	<-- -	citizenship	1.215	.686	.147	8.254	** *
SocialImpact	<-- -	citizenship	1.340	.749	.156	8.586	** *
Enjoyment	<-- -	citizenship	1.336	.594	.174	7.669	** *

According to table 2, organizational spirituality has a significant negative effect on attitude towards the virtual world ( $\beta = -1.096$ ,  $\text{sig} < .001$ ). In other words, an increase in organizational spirituality is accompanied by a significant decrease in attitude towards the virtual world. On the other hand, through the mediation of citizenship behavior, an increase in organizational spirituality, there is a significant increase in citizenship behavior ( $\beta = .846$ ,  $\text{sig} < .001$ ). An increase in citizenship behavior is followed by a significant increase in attitude towards the virtual world ( $\beta = 1.327$ ,  $\text{sig} < .001$ ). Therefore, an increase in organizational spirituality, the mediating effect of citizenship behavior is also significantly increased. According to table 3, the fitness model is acceptable.

**Table 3: Model fitness indices**

proposed model	Acceptable range	abbreviation	index
773.342	-	AIC	<b>Information index</b>
681.306	-	BIC	
0.98	0.90-1	CFI	<b>compatible</b>
0.96	0.90-1	TLI	
0.98	0.90-1	IFI	
0.93	0.90-1	RFI	
0.96	0.90-1	NFI	
0.054	0-0.08	RMSEA	<b>economical</b>



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0.95	0.95-1	GFI	<b>absolute</b>
0.94	0.95-1	AGFI	
87.948	Depending on sample size	$\chi^2$	
42	Depending on sample size	Df	
2.094	Depending on sample size	$\chi^2/df$	
0.057	>.05	p-value	

#### **4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION:**

The present research aimed to investigate the effect and correlation of spirituality in organizational environment and attitude towards the virtual world mediated by organizational citizenship behavior and its aspects among the managers of private companies in Iran. The results indicated that spirituality in organizational environment had a significant negative effect on managers' attitude towards the virtual world. Spirituality in organizational environment lowers one's attitude towards the virtual world. However, spirituality in organizational environment has a significant positive impact on managers' citizenship behavior. Spirituality in organizational environment helps to increase organizational citizenship behavior and makes one do more than s/he is supposed to do. It, therefore, helps to organizational efficacy and efficiency. Citizenship behavior also positively affects attitude towards the virtual world. Therefore, an increase in individualization and voluntariness in achieving organizational goals, citizenship behavior is raised and the organizational attitude towards virtual reality is increased among managers. Consequently, developing citizenship behavior and the use of IT and the virtual reality affect each other cyclically.

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